

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7831
INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY GABORONE PRIORITY
AMEBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 0806

USUN FOR AMB YOUNG

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV RH
SUBJ: RHODESIA: PRESIDENT KAUNDA DESCRIBES RHODESIAN RAID

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT KAUNDA DESCRIBED THE RHODESIAN RAID
ON LUONGWA AS A PREMEDITATED ATTACK USING AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTER
BORNE TROOPS ON A ZAMBIAN VILLAGE. HE CLAIMED THAT EIGHT ENEMY
AIRCRAFT (INCLUDING HELICOPTERS) WERE SHOT DOWN. TWO OF THEM NOW
IN ZAMBIAN WATERS - PRESUMABLY THE ZAMBEZI RIVER. ONE OF THESE
IS A HAWKER-HUNTER AND THE OTHER CHINOOK. HE CALLED ON THE
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AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO EXPLAIN HOW THE CHINOOK GOT TO RHODESIA.
TOTAL KNOWN ZAMBIAN CASUALTIES ARE 22 KILLED AND 19 INJURED.
END SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT KAUNDA CONVOKED THE DIPLOMATIC CORP FOR A "BRIEFING"
MONDAY MORNING DURING WHICH HE DESCRIBED IN DETAIL THE RHODESIAN
RAID IN THE DISTRICT OF LUANGWA ON MARCH 6. AS HE DESCRIBED IT,

THE ZAMBIANS HAD RECEIVED INTELLIGENCE ALMOST TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE ATTACK OF RHODESIAN MASSING OF TROOPS AND INTENTIONS TO ATTACK IN THE AREA. AT 9:45 ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 6, THE RHODESIANS DROPPED TWO BOMBS ON THE ZESCO HEADQUARTERS (ZAMBIAN ELECTRICITY COMPANY) THINKING THEY WERE FUEL TANKS AND THAT THEIR EXPLOSION WOULD DIVERT ATTENTION FROM THE ATTACK THAT BEGAN AT 1000 AGAINST THE ZAMBIAN VILLAGE OF KABALAMANJA WHICH WAS LEAD BY 10 JETS STRAFFING THE SCHOOL, VILLAGE AND TOWN HALL.

2. TWO HUNDRED RHODESIAN TROOPS WERE THEN FERRIED ACROSS IN CHINOOK HELICOPTERS. KAUNDA SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ASK THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, THROUGH ITS AMBASSADOR, HOW IT WAS THAT THE CHINOOKS GOT TO RHODESIA. THIS HE SAID WAS NOT AN ATTACK ON THE U.S., HE WAS MERELY ASKING FOR AN EXPLANATION. HE UNDERSTOOD HELICOPTERS SUCH AS THESE HAD BEEN USED IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA BY THE AMERICANS AND ALSO IN THE MIDDLE EAST. THEY COULD HAVE COME FROM ANY SOURCE. LATER IN THE MEETING, HE INDICATED THAT THE CHINOOK AND THE HAWKER-HUNTER BOTH HAD MARKINGS ON THEM WHICH APPEARED TO BE HEBREW.

3. USING MISSILES, THE PRESIDENT SAID, ZAMBIAN DESTROYED EIGHT PLANES. HE WAS VERY PROUD OF THEIR RECORD. IN THE TOTAL OF 72 HOURS OF FIGHTING, ZAMBIA LOST A TOTAL OF 22 DEAD AND 19 INJURED BETWEEN BOTH SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS. THERE MAY BE MORE WHEN EVERYONE IS FINALLY ACCOUNTED FOR.

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4. IN THE PAST, THE PRESIDENT SAID WHEN THE RHODESIANS CROSSED INTO ZAMBIA, THEY LAID MINES AS THEY RETREATED. THIS TIME THEY DID NOT HAVE TIME TO DO SO BECAUSE OF THE VIGOROUS ZAMBIAN DEFENSE.

5. THE PRESIDENT SAID NO FREEDOM FIGHTERS WERE INVOLVED AT ALL. HE LABELED THE STORY THAT THE RHODESIANS WERE ENGAGED IN HOT PURSUIT OF ZIPA SOLDIERS AS "NONSENSE". "HOW COULD THE RAID HAVE BEEN PLANNED TWO WEEKS IN ADVANCE," HE ASKED.

6. FINALLY, THE PRESIDENT SAID ZAMBIA HAS A RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AND TO SEEK SUPPORT FROM FRIENDLY NATIONS WHO ARE READY AND WILLING TO HELP. HE WAS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO RETALIATE. BOMBING RHODESIAN CITIES WOULD INTERNATIONALIZE THE AFFAIR. HE WOULD HAVE TO RESPOND WITHIN HOURS OR DAYS NOT WEEKS.

7. PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR CHONA LATER TOLD ME THAT THE RHODESIANS HAD BEEN ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH A BEACH-HEAD ON THE NORTHERN SIDE OF THE ZAMBEZI WHERE THEY WOULD REMAIN FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS AND FROM WHICH THEY COULD MOUNT QUICK ATTACKS ON ZIPA CAMPS ALONG THE RIVER. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE RHODESIANS KEPT UP A STEADY FIRE OVER THE AIRCRAFT IN THE WATER SO THAT THE ZAMBIANS

COULD NOT APPROACH THEM TO IDENTIFY THEM FURTHER.

8. KAUNDA REPEATED THE STORY IN A LITTLE MORE DETAIL TO THE PRESS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE MEETING WITH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS WITHOUT MENTIONING THE REQUEST TO ME FOR AN EXPLANATION OF HOW THE CHINOOKS GOT TO RHODESIA OR THE POSSIBILITY OF EARLY RETALIATION. HOWEVER, HE ELABORATED FURTHER TO THE PRESS ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF EVENTUAL WESTERN SUPPORT FOR SMITH - WHO THEY WOULD HAVE RECOGNIZED. AT THAT POINT HE SAID ZAMBIA WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT GO THE EASTERN COUNTRIES FOR SUPPORT.

9. COMMENT: WE ARE AS SKEPTICAL AS THE PRESS APPARENTLY WAS ABOUT THE ZAMBIAN ACCOUNT OF THE RHODESIAN RAID WITH RELATION TO ABSENSE OF ZIPRA FIGHTERS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF 8 AIRCRAFT
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AND HELICOPTERS. WE CAN ONLY ASSUME IT WAS INTENDED LARGELY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION TO RELIEVE PRESSURE FOR RETALIATION AND DEFEND AGAINST CRITICISM OF ZAMBIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONFLICT.

10. THE PRESIDENT WAS VERY SPECIFIC IN REQUESTING A REPORT FROM ME ON HOW THE CHINOOKS GOT TO RHODESIA. SINCE THE REQUEST WAS MADE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, WE SHOULD RESPOND RAPIDLY. THERE WILL BE QUESTIONS TO KAUNDA ABOUT WHETHER HE HAS RECEIVED A RESPONSE FROM US. IT IS APPARENT THAT WE CANNOT EXAMINE THE HELICOPTER. PRESUMABLY, HOWEVER, WE HAVE SOME IDEA OF HOW THESE HELICOPTER MIGHT HAVE ARRIVED IN RHODESIA- ASSUMING THAT THEY ARE INDEED CHINOOKS. I SUGGEST THAT WE GO BACK VERY SOON WITH A RESPONSE EVEN IF IT IS ONLY A PRELIMINARY ONE.
LOW

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Message Attributes

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